



## Thai-style chaos provokes right-wing backlash

*The recent events in Thailand, says MARC ASKEW, expose the continuing clash of ideologies unleashed by the coup of 2006 and the overthrow of elected governments by organised conservative crowd action and judicial fiat during 2008.*

The bloody events of 10 April in Bangkok reveal vividly the character of Thailand's chronic crisis of political legitimacy. Though many commentators are understandably focusing on the minutiae of the enigmatic violence of 10 April which led to the death of 24 people and injuries to over 800 more, these events also reveal vividly the labyrinthine nature of power play in Thai-style conflict and the continuing potency of the 'third' hand (whether real or fictitious) in fomenting violence in moments of crisis.

For many analysts, the central ghost in the machine remains Thaksin Shinawatra, who has allegedly bankrolled the red shirt movement, and without whom they believe the ongoing agitation would be impossible. However, the red-shirt movement now represents far more than Thaksin, as others have noted.

Most critically, the recent events expose the continuing clash of ideologies unleashed by the coup of 2006 and the overthrow of elected governments by organised conservative crowd action and judicial fiat during 2008.

Since coming to power by parliamentary vote in December 2008, the Democrat Party has tried in vain to squash politics back into the parliamentary box. The unprecedented crowd action of the People's Alliance for Democracy in paralysing the country in late 2008,

tolerated by the military and exploited by the Democrat party to step into power, is the precedent that the red-shirt movement has followed. Thailand is now reaping the whirlwind. In mid-March 2010, what seemingly began as a festival of popular democracy among crowds of red-shirt supporters demanding the dissolution of the Democrat Party-led parliament and new elections, turned into a bloody



*Marc Askew (background) at red shirts rally, Bangkok.*

confrontation on 10 April as troops attempted to clear the core rally area around the Phan Fa bridge and the Democracy Monument in central Bangkok.

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## Thai-style chaos

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In the aftermath of the fatalities and injuries (to both troops as well as demonstrators) caused by mysterious gunmen and bomb-throwers, the blame-game continues between red-shirt leaders and the Democrat-led government as to who was responsible for the targeted killings that occurred. However, this confrontation was already foreseeable for a number of reasons. First, it was predictable in the diametrically-opposed positions of the protagonists from the beginning; second, it was predictable in the calibrated escalation of provocation among red-shirt leaders (modelled in many ways on the yellow shirt crowd action of October 2008); third it was inevitable because Prime Minister Abhisit had to affirm control of the situation at numerous levels—including the pragmatic domain of limiting crowd activity and the symbolic domain of affirming legitimacy for political survival.

As happened with the clamp down on red-shirt demonstrators in March–April of 2009, the government and the military leadership, armed with emergency powers and control over radio and TV media outlets, attempted to control the narrative of events and interpretation of the violence and its black-clad perpetrators. They are now demonising the red-shirt movement (in particular its leadership) as a fundamental threat to the nation and its highest institution of monarchy. They have opened a space for the People's Alliance for Democracy to emerge (disguised as a variety of non-aligned networks) once more on the streets in the name of the 'the nation' to legitimise a hardline crackdown on critics of Thailand's established power structure.

Over the last eventful month political theatre, rhetoric, rumour, dissimulation and innuendo have been prominent among parties in the conflict. During the major rally at Phan Fa bridge beginning on 14 March the rhetoric of red shirt leaders (particularly of the master orators Nattawut Saikoe and Wira Musikaphong) intensified beyond a condemnation of the *amart* (aristocratic bureaucrats) and the government's 'double standards' to a full-blown rhetoric of class war, drawing on the evocative identification of the red shirts as

'phrai' (bonded serfs in the per-modern Thai social structure). After two weeks of escalating protests (which forced the virtual besiegement of Prime Minister Abhisit in a military camp) negotiations were brokered between both sides and televised. During these sessions Prime Minister Abhisit gave an impressive display as a statesman, willing to engage with the red shirt leaders in continuing talks about their ongoing concerns. He offered the appearance of concessions by offering a house dissolution in nine months, though not 15 days as demanded by the red shirts.

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**The government and the military leadership are now demonising the red-shirt movement as a fundamental threat to the nation and the monarchy.**

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For their part, the red shirt leaders needed to display resolution to their own audience, and pressed for a quick dissolution, not trusting the wily Democrats to guarantee a process of dissolution that would be contingent upon a referendum.

Though Abhisit's therapeutic self-presentation in the televised negotiations was alluring, he chose to ignore the fact that to the red shirts he was not a neutral player in the game of political reform, but a major part of the political problem. Further, his argument that he wanted to see the political atmosphere calm down before elections were held was the complete reverse of red-shirt logic, that the Democrat government was the product of an outrageous political rape that had been committed on the people: effectively the product of a second 'silent coup' in December 2008.

Soon after this the red shirt leadership expanded the rally to the busy retail district of Ratchaprasong, defying the government attempts to eject them. As with all crowd-government confrontations since 2008, the threat and the reality of violence have been a critical ingredient in power play and discourse. As with the clashes of October 2008 and April 2009, the party that was demonstrated to be the instigator would lose all political capital. This time the red shirt leadership and its supporters affirmed their commitment to peaceful protest, but

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such commitment was compromised from the beginning by a string of bombings on military installations and other public places. As in April 2009 the red shirt leadership claimed that their peaceful protests were being discredited by a 'third hand.' For its part, the government and the military could not locate the culprits of these bombings, despite the finger being pointed to the maverick Thaksin-supporting general Khattiya (*Sae Daeng*) Sawasdipol.

As with all previous clashes, controlling the narrative of culprits and victims has been imperative. The government began this when it declared a state of emergency on 7 April after red shirts broke into the parliament building to demand an immediate dissolution. On the following day the signal of the red shirt cable TV channel (People Channel) was blocked, as were a number of key web news sites reporting on the red shirts. All television channels explicitly critical of the red shirts, including the PAD yellow shirt station ASTV, remained untouched.

The government's main TV channel, NBT, stepped up its condemnation, most stridently in its talk shows, which were hosted by ardent enemies of Thaksin Shinawatra, such as Chirmsak Pintong. In the afternoon of 10 April, troops moved into the Rachdamnoen Avenue area to pressure protestors, but by dusk mayhem had broken out with confusing accounts of shootings of both red shirts and soldiers (including senior officers, and the death of a Japanese photographer) at the Khok Wua intersection. Video footage the following day revealed shadowy black-clad figures firing war weapons. Other clips indicated that firing was coming from above surrounding buildings.

The exact identity of these figures is still obscure, but the government narrative is that these were 'terrorists' connected to elements of the red shirt movement, bent on creating chaos. This does not account for the larger number of red shirt deaths. As for the believability of official version that soldiers played no role in shootings, scepticism has been stimulated following a change in the military spokesman's information from an initial statement that soldiers only fired live rounds in the air, later changed to an admission that some

soldiers had fired live rounds in self-defence. A number of scenarios are possible in explaining the shooting and identifying perpetrators, which also includes the involvement of serving military personnel engaged in their own covert conflict. Over the whole period of the red shirt demonstrations, the military command has shown a singular lack of capacity in identifying and apprehending those responsible for violent attacks. This allows for room for rumour and speculation about collusion in exacerbating the violence. Not surprisingly, the red shirt leadership is blaming the military for fomenting the shootings.

Regardless of all this, the 10 April events have given the government the upper hand to proclaim elements of the red shirt leadership as allied with 'terrorists'. This has served to besmirch the red shirt movement as a whole. Ordinary red shirt supporters are being counselled to leave the rally site (now centralised at the Ratchaprasong intersection) for their own safety. The other major development following 10 April is that the paranoid discourse of the 'nation and monarchy in danger' has been encouraged to flourish. Days later, several networks proclaiming that they represented non-aligned citizens, though led by noted yellow shirts, have demonstrated in Bangkok to oppose the dissolution of parliament and urge the government to apply sterner measures of martial law against protestors.

This development is significant and contrasts with the period of demonstrations in 2009, when an official government militia, the 'blue shirts' were recruited to oppose red shirts. Now the popular red shirt opponents are supposedly ordinary non-aligned citizens. Their slogans, however, betray their conservative yellow shirt identity which brands opponents of the existing regime as traitors to the nation. Not surprisingly, many concerned observers in Thailand are now comparing the atmosphere of backlash to the paranoia that led to the massacre of protesting students in October 1976.

*Marc Askeu is Senior Fellow in Anthropology, School of Philosophy, Anthropology and Social Inquiry, University of Melbourne. He is currently on fieldwork in Thailand and is editor of the forthcoming volume Legitimacy Crisis in Thailand, to be published by Silkorm Books and King Prajadhipok's Institute.*

## Burma and Thailand, Thailand and Burma

*The prospect that Thailand's flirtation with democratic institutions and practices is now facing grave, and potentially fatal, threats has, says NICHOLAS FARRELLY, led some commentators to consider a troubling question: Can Thailand become Burma?*

Over recent decades Burma's status as an international pariah, ruled by a clique of xenophobic generals, has contrasted with the relatively open, relaxed and tolerant image cultivated by Thailand. Thailand's politics have remained tumultuous but the economy has continued to grow and the country's smiling, happy international demeanour has rarely failed.

Even the royalist military coup of 19 September 2006 was greeted with a mix of apathy and enthusiasm. There was no bloodshed when the army ousted former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Now, with the festering wounds left by that coup unable to heal, Thai politics has lurched into a more violent and confrontational stage. Twenty-five lives have been lost in recent street battles and the immediate prognosis for Thai society is now worse than many had realised. This confrontation between competing visions of Thailand's future shows no signs of diminishing. Anguish and frustration have become defining features of the national political terrain.

Since Thailand's coup of 2006 commentators have mused on the comparative political trajectories of countries in mainland Southeast Asia. Two countries that often excite such comparisons are Burma and Thailand. It helps that they are neighbours and historical rivals. Both have experienced their political ups-and-downs.

In the Burmese case the general impression is that there have been many more downs than ups in recent decades. Descriptions of Burma's special recipe for military dominance, social distress and economic malaise guarantee that it has not become an exemplar of national

success. Few countries would seek to mimic the Burmese model. But the prospect that Thailand's flirtation with democratic institutions and practices is now facing grave, and potentially fatal, threats has led some commentators to consider a troubling question: Can Thailand become Burma? Like any grand comparison of this sort there are too many inconsistencies for an overly confident prediction.

But what we tend to forget is that during much of the 20th century the political situations in both countries were similarly beset by conflict. In Burma there is the long history of ethnic demands for greater autonomy and, more recently, the calls for democracy spearheaded by Aung San Suu Kyi. Thailand's bloody 20th century is less widely recalled but it includes massacres of protestors, Communist-inspired provincial rebellions and sporadic episodes of violent conflict in the Muslim-majority areas of the Deep South.



Sign on Thailand-Burma border.

Furthermore, for much of the 20th century Thailand was ruled by a series of military strongmen whose ideological orientation and practical policy implementation have much in common with Burma's current crop of ruling generals. On both sides there is an enduring expectation that in emergencies only military rule can save the nation from ultimate destruction.

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The military cultures of the two countries also share more in common than we tend to acknowledge. In both countries a tight-knit officer corps, trained at a small number of elite educational institutions, takes collective responsibility for national security and, more boldly, for national cohesion, strength and pride. Continued efforts by military elites to determine

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## Burma and Thailand

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*Burma: dancing to the general's tune.*

political outcomes ensure that the career trajectories of senior Thai and Burmese military officers are not manifestly dissimilar. Well before the pinnacle of their careers, ambitious senior officers are expected to play both military and civilian politics.

Is Thailand poised to return to the condition of Burma? There are good reasons for anticipating a future for Thai politics that is not nearly so dire.

First, the country is much more integrated into the global economy than Burma, and has far more to lose by any further diminution of its international standing. The countless foreign companies with interests in Thailand combined with the more internationalist and cosmopolitan outlook of its people, especially in urban areas, means that the costs of isolation from the international community would be great.

Second, Thailand's elite has cultivated a self-image that is based, in part, on the legitimacy that is offered by international endorsements. The royal family itself is constantly travelling abroad and seeking international awards, degrees and other recognitions that befit its self-image. Many organisations, including the United Nations, have proven willing to indulge the Thai elite's effort to gain global respectability. This could be put at risk if the country was to lose its nascent democratic character.

Third, and arguably most important, the Thai military has publicly suggested that its role should no longer be explicitly political. This retreat from the style of military politics practiced in Thailand for so

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many years, and which still holds sway in Burma, may be justified on practical rather than ideological grounds. In the year after the September 2006 coup the Thai military struggled to implement its political program. Some among its officer corps

may now consider that running a government is too much hard work. And in the current showdown they must worry about the potential for unpredictable and disastrous outcomes.

As Burma looks towards its 2010 elections, and as Thailand's democratic culture faces up to new threats, further comparisons between the countries will prove timely. The unconsummated democratic aspirations of people in mainland Southeast Asia are rapidly

returning to be a region-wide norm.



*Nicholas Farrelly* is a researcher at the ARC Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security, College of Asia and the Pacific, the Australian National University.

## Draft history curriculum 'needs more work'

The new *Australian Curriculum* is to be commended for the commitment to telling the Australian story 'within the Asian context', but Professor **TONY MILNER** has concerns about whether the teaching outlined will be able to achieve this aim.

Telling the Australian story within the Asian context' is a critical task, and not just for reasons of historical accuracy. If we tell it in this way, we will drive an interest in the serious study of Asia and demonstrate the rationale—the urgent need—for Australians to seek to understand the historical forces, the perspectives, the values of the different peoples in our region: the peoples with whom, it is clear, our future lies in both economic and security terms.

Telling the Australian story in its Asian context will do much to bring about the Asia-literate Australia which Prime Minister Rudd and many others say we need. Having said this, aspects of the history Curriculum document worry me: the document may in fact promote an approach to historical education that the Curriculum writers do not intend.

The introduction to the history Curriculum includes the suggestion that 'Asian history' will be 'reflected in its own right in the Australian Curriculum'. This sounds promising. It would not necessarily mean pressing on students a vast amount of Asian material, but it does mean that 'Asia'—Asian perspectives, values, trajectories—should be taken seriously and not merely swept into an essentially European narrative. Presenting Asian history in its own right would seem to me to be a critical aspect of telling the Australian story 'within the Asian context'.

It is especially with respect to the objective of presenting Asian history in this way that I think the draft history Curriculum needs more work. So, how does the document deal with 'Asia'?

I see mention of early Asian contact with Australia—clearly the visits of Macassans to northern Australia before the British arrival. I pause at the interesting section on

'exploration', but it seems to be internal exploration only. Could we not look here at the early 19th century settlements on the Cobourg Peninsula in Arnhem Land? They were designed to reach out into the Archipelago (what became the Dutch East Indies) and beyond—they were an early attempt to engage British Australia with the Asian region.



Map courtesy Y & C Critchell, Cartographic Consultants

Reading further, I note there will be an overview of how Australia's 'form of government' and 'path to nationhood' compare with the situation and experience of other countries. Here is an obvious place to position Australia 'within the Asian context'—but the only other nations mentioned are the United States and South Africa.

In Year 6 I feel optimism again when I see the heading 'Australia, the British Empire and Asia'. But the detail is about 'Australia's links' and the links listed are with New Zealand and Fiji, and include 'the occupancy of Papua as a colony of Queensland'. Students are then expected, I gather, to consider 'other countries' perceptions of Australia, but in the Asian case, at least, they have as yet learnt nothing of the 'other countries', their societies, their cultures.

In these early parts of the draft history Curriculum I get the impression that 'Asia' is being set in an Australian context rather than Australia in an Asian one. The distinction is important. Nothing could be further from an Asia-literate Australia than a community that continues to see the Asian

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region in such a narrow and potentially dismissive fashion. Such an approach does not prepare students for the challenges we face in Australia today.

Moving to Year 7, a section called 'What was the Ancient World'? mentions presenting a timeline of ancient societies in the Greco-Roman World, the Near East ('near' to whom?) and Asia. Egypt, Greece and Rome appear in sections 12–16, and in sections 17–22 there is a choice: China, India or Australasia. What does this mean? I think it means that students (and teachers) can avoid China and India altogether. Is this teaching Australia 'within the Asian context'? Is this teaching Asian history 'in its own right'? Is this Asia literacy?

In Year 8 the student moves into the 'Medieval World' (500–1750). Is 'medieval' the right concept when dealing with China or India (or Southeast Asia) in the period 500–1750? We are in danger here of sweeping Asia into a European narrative, just what must not be done if Australian students are to take seriously the region around us, the region with which we are so closely engaged. There is nothing wrong, of course, in suggesting that medieval Europe contributes to the heritage of European Australians.

In Year 8, it is very good that there will be an examination of chronology and the religious, economic, political and social life of 'Asian societies' from 500–1750. But it will be important not to let this material be cast in an essentially European format, as a type of sub-plot in the 'Medieval World'. That would be teaching Asian history not in its own right, but in Europe's.

It is a worry too that the final 'Depth Study' in this Medieval year is called 'Expanding Horizons'. It would have been better to call it 'European Expanding Horizons', as I do not see mention of the great Ming voyages of the 15th century, or of other Asian perspectives. It would be better to be explicit in this section about the European focus: but even then, I am concerned that in this year of study the Asian material, probably

interesting in itself, seems to be positioned within what is in reality a European narrative, a narrative beginning with the 'Medieval' and ending with 'Expanding Horizons'. Like the failure to insist on the study of ancient India or ancient China, casting the period 500–1750 in a European mode does not help the task of getting students to take Asian history seriously.

In the Year 9 section 'The Making of the Modern World and Australia' we can welcome the Depth Study of 'societies that made up the Asia–Pacific region about 1800'. But there is a challenge here too. After showing where the different Asian societies are on the map, the Curriculum proceeds (in section 13) to discuss the 'impact of European influence in the Asia–Pacific region'. Analysing this impact is certainly important, particularly so for Australians—but how best can it be done?

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We need to know how far European influence in the 19th and 20th centuries changed these Asian societies, and made them more like the British-influenced society being developed during the same period on the Australian continent. The question is of vital importance today as we try to come to terms with Chinese approaches to law, or when we consider how far notions of human rights or governance that operate in the Asian region fit with the values that are dominant in Australia.

A Depth Study on the 'impact of European influence in the Asia-Pacific region' will first have to give students an understanding of the societies coming under European rule or influence—an understanding that will help the student to decide how far the societies concerned were transformed.

The student will need to know something of approaches to government or to business

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transactions in 1800, for instance, if he or she is to make an assessment of the extent to which older perspectives and values were retained through the colonial period. The analysis of impact, that is to say, can only be achieved if we first take seriously the 'pre-European influence' societies—if Asian history up to this point has been taught 'in its own right'.

The danger in this section of the Curriculum—dealing with the 'impact of European influence'—is that Asia will again be treated essentially within the narrative of European colonialism: that the impact of Europe will be examined from an external not internal point of view. Such an outcome would be all the more regrettable if we consider the positive potential for this theme. If taught effectively, studying the European impact (or lack of impact) could really stimulate our students, especially those with some awareness of the front-page 'Asia' stories in our newspapers.

When the Curriculum document turns to the central topic of 'Australia in the Modern World' from 1901 to the present, it seems to me that here may be another valuable opportunity to set Australia 'in the Asian context'. It is explained that Australian migration policies, especially 'White Australia', will be compared with the 'migration policies in other developed nations'. In this and many other respects, the developing Australian nation might also be compared with the different states emerging in the Asian region.

Among other advantages, comparing Australia's historical development—our political, social and economic development—with the trajectories of different Asian states (including colonial states) would strengthen the basis for thinking more deeply about Australia-Asia relations today. Examining the specific historical experience of Indonesia or China, might well help to identify aspirations and sensitivities that can promote misunderstanding in Australian interaction with these national communities.

In this latter part of the history Curriculum, dealing with 'Australia in the Modern World',

I have two further concerns. First, a specific one: I cannot comprehend why the Second World War is presented in the way it is. The presentation might make sense for English or Canadian students, but for Australians surely the really huge issue is the way Japan turned our region upside down.

Before the war the Asian region was under European and American influence and rule: the power centres for Asia were London, Paris, The Hague and Washington. Japan was the one serious Asian power. Following the Japanese conquests European colonialism never recovered. Australia had to deal with a new and challenging region. Here is the moment when the region we deal with now—the Asia we gain so much from, and where we are also meeting difficulties—came into being.

My impression is that the 1940s and 1950s were a period of serious reflection, a time when Australians (at least an elite group) began to think about how this country's regional context was changing, and how Australia might possibly be positioned in the new Asia.

My second concern relates to the attention given to our British heritage. The preface to the discussion in this section of the Curriculum says that the 'transformation of the modern world' provides a 'necessary context' for understanding Australia's 'place within the Asia-Pacific region...'. But is such a 'world' perspective the best context? Just as there is a danger that examining Asia in the context of the medieval period or European colonialism will make it difficult to think seriously about the Asian region, so a world history setting runs risks.

Casting the emergence of post-World War II Asian states in terms of the 'struggles for freedom and rights'—seen as a major theme in the world history approach—has some advantages, but may also have the effect of disguising the differences that operate between societies. Of course there are connections between events and movements across the globe, but it is probably the differences in experience that historians should focus on, particularly if we want to prepare Australians to deal with the

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range of societies around us, with their different perspectives and values.

Stressing our British heritage—if in doing so we draw attention to our larger European heritage (going back even to Greece and Rome)—has advantages. Being explicit about our British and European heritage of institutions and values, rather than seeing Australia and Asian societies primarily as part of the sweep of so-called modern world history, can assist the purpose of presenting Australia ‘in the Asian context’.

In giving special emphasis to the British-influenced character of our vast, 200-year, nation-building project (specifically of our political and legal institutions and the value systems that shape our commercial and social lives), the point could be made, perhaps in the latter stages of a curriculum presentation of the ‘Australian story’, that it is these British characteristics that distinguish Australia most of all in the Asian region. Standing back to delineate this European heritage of ideas and institutions, we recognise it as only one of many heritages in the region.

For some Asian observers it is our Europeanness, particularly the role of British liberal ideas that makes Australia attractive; in other circumstances these ideas lead us to move against the grain of the region, or at least important parts of the region. The European heritage can make Australia look to be something of an exotic product in regional terms, and the product of a period of European and American domination now believed by many to be drawing to a close.

Confronting our Europeanness—rather than merely insisting that we all (Australians, Chinese, Japanese, Indonesians and so forth) ought to be viewed as participants in a world or global history—can alert Australians to the need to appreciate differences in histories and value systems. If the Australian national story is told in its Asian setting—if we ‘provincialise’ our Europeanness (to employ a term introduced by a distinguished Indian historian)—the implication can be obvious: Australia with its special European background has much to offer, but also much to learn, certainly if we want to avoid

the risk of being a country at odds with its region. Israel would appear to be a dramatic of such an unfortunate country.

Recognising how others see us—acknowledging that we too bring a specific value system to bear in our negotiations and deliberations concerning Asian societies, where different systems may operate—is educationally a significant step forward. It is a task in which the study of history can be critical and, I would argue, a task that is essential in developing an Asia-literate Australia.

It is encouraging to see in the Curriculum document, therefore, the objectives of telling the Australian story ‘within the Asia context’, and of presenting Asian history ‘reflected in its own right’. My concern is with achieving these objectives. In particular, I see the danger that we might, quite unintentionally, end by moving in an opposite direction: by not teaching the Australian story within the Asian context, but teaching ‘Asia’ in an Australian and European setting. Such an outcome would do little to prepare Australians to deal with the dynamic Asia that we face today.

Really teaching the Australian story ‘within the Asian context’ will sharpen not obscure understanding of our great, British-influenced, nation-building. Drawing attention to the way we differ from our neighbours, as well as the features and aspirations that we share, helps to underline our need for ‘Asia’ knowledge. Telling the Australian story ‘within the Asian context’, if we can do this well, not only acknowledges the need for, but can actually drive, the advance to ‘Asia literacy’.



*Professor Milner is Basham Professor of Asian History, Australian National University, and also Professorial Fellow, the University of Melbourne. A Board Member of [Asialink](#) and the [Asia Society AustralAsia Centre](#), he is co-editor of *Australia in**

*Asia* (Oxford University Press), three volumes. This is an edited version of his address to the [Asia Education Foundation's](#) national summit on 23 March. A full copy of the address is available on the [AEF website](#).

# Preserving Asia's heritage

*Some of Asia's most significant heritage sites are under threat from urbanisation, industrialisation and tourism—but there are also some good stories to tell, says BILL LOGAN, who reflects on a long and distinguished career helping to preserve the cultural heritage of Asia and the Pacific.*

*How did you become interested in Asian and Australian heritage issues?*

I completed my PhD at Monash University in 1979 with a thesis on the gentrification of inner Melbourne. Then, in 1986, I took a study leave in UNESCO's Division of Cultural Heritage in Paris, where I was attached to the Asia desk. This was my first serious encounter with Asian heritage and I found it an exciting new direction.

After being appointed as Dean of Arts at Victoria College, one of the institutions to join Deakin University in the Dawkins round of amalgamations, in 1987, I expanded the Asian studies, languages and interpreting and translating courses and set up a Heritage in Asia Research Group.

Another UNESCO consultancy came along in January 1990—to Hanoi—to work with local planners on a submission for the old city to be the focus of a UNESCO Campaign for the Safeguarding of the Heritage of Mankind.

I had had little previous interest in Vietnam, but when I was preparing to go on the mission I found there was little published on the city's history and decided then to make this my next research project. Ten years later my book *Hanoi: Biography of a City* came out and Vietnamese heritage has continued to be a main focus of my work.

By chance an invitation landed on my desk in 1996 to attend the inaugural conference in Valencia, Spain, of a new UNESCO venture—'Forum UNESCO: Universities and Heritage'. I volunteered to organise the third international conference at Deakin in 1998.

In the 'Declaration of Melbourne' signed at the end of that conference by UNESCO, Melbourne's Lord Mayor and the host university, Deakin, agreed to create a

research and training centre, a postgraduate course in cultural heritage and a UNESCO Chair.

This was the origin of Deakin's [Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia and the Pacific](#) (CHCAP), our Master of Cultural Heritage course and PhD specialisation, and my UNESCO Chair of Heritage and Urbanism.

*You have held influential positions on various international bodies. What have been some of your main contributions in the international sphere?*

CHCAP's mission under my directorship was to assist universities in developing Asia-Pacific countries to play an active role in promoting an understanding of their heritage and in protecting it both through national mechanisms and through UNESCO programs. This means helping to train university staff and students as well as young practitioners, by collaborating on curriculum development and research.

We were given funds for one scholarship a year. We selected people who had the potential to set up or strengthen heritage courses when they returned to their universities. In this way we helped the University of Santo Tomas Manila, and the university in Goroka, PNG, to establish courses. Other scholarship students came from Vietnam, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan. Unfortunately funding was later withdrawn.

[Colin Long](#) and I have been involved in professional training at the Hanoi Architectural University. We also provided curriculum assistance to Silpakorn University, Bangkok, when it set up a PhD program in architectural conservation and tourism management, and each year we taught several of the core units in the program. I also collaborated with Chulalongkorn University on numerous occasions, including a current project on the Thai-Burma Railway funded by the Australia-Thailand Foundation.

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*Teaching Silpakorn class.*

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My early projects with UNESCO were in-house studies, but from 1990 I have been involved in field missions, including to Hanoi, Moenjodaro, Hue, Luang Prabang and Lijiang and Hoi An. Some of these have been joint missions with the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), which is UNESCO chief adviser on cultural heritage under the



1972 World Heritage Convention.

I also drafted many State of Conservation reports on World Heritage sites facing difficulties, which ICOMOS presented at World Heritage Committee meetings. I was national president of Australia ICOMOS 1999–2002. I've been associated for many years with the International Council for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), another expert body based in Rome, specified in the World Heritage Convention and with a special focus on training.

As well as two periods as Visiting Fellow, I was involved in establishing and running of the joint ICCROM-UNESCO [Asian Academy for Heritage Management](#).

I'm currently an invited member of an international group developing a World Heritage Global Training Strategy at meetings in Chexbres, Switzerland, last year and Rome in May 2010.

*How well are Asian countries in general caring for their heritage sites?*

As in Australia, the commitment to protecting cultural heritage has been very mixed. From the outside, I've been interested in whole story of city evolution

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Most Asian governments see some usefulness in limited heritage protection. This is especially true where the heritage has ideological use.

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and advocate protection of the best of the various cultural layers. I push for an inclusive approach to identifying what heritage is significant, rather than just the heritage of the political elite or dominant religion. The intangible heritage of artistic and craft skills is also important. In Asia all countries have cultural policies but the heritage focus remains narrower than this.

Many Asian governments have tended to reject, for instance, the heritage of the colonial past. Many see heritage protection as of minor importance compared to their goals of achieving rapid economic development.

After decades of crushing poverty, this is understandable. Nevertheless most Asian governments see some usefulness in limited heritage protection. This is especially true where the heritage has ideological use; that is, supporting the governments' efforts to shape the national identity and, along the way, reinforcing their political position. This is not peculiar to Asia, of course, and we saw a similar process under the Howard Government in Australia.

Most Asian governments support heritage sites and skills that can be exploited economically, notably through tourism. Many seek World Heritage status or make use of heritage in major events, such as the Beijing Olympics, to give help project their major city, usually the capital, onto the world stage. Again none of this is limited to Asia.

*Do you have concerns for any particular and significant heritage sites in Asia?*

One of the most endangered sites is Luang Prabang. Here the cross-cultural element—fusion of traditional Lao and French colonial—is being lost as the Lao population moves to the suburbs and their traditional houses are converted to tourist

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## Preserving Asia's heritage

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accommodation. At some point the declining Lao population will mean insufficient alms-giving for the Buddhist wats to survive. In the case of Hue, the World Heritage inscription failed to protect the Perfumed River, which is a key element in the city's imperial heritage, linking the citadel to the emperors' mausoleums upstream.

The local government thinks only of the immediate need, pushed by the national government, to give priority to industrial development. Industrial land use and new housing could be carefully located so that it does not conflict with the cultural and natural heritage and leaves the river and its banks for future recreational use.

Lijiang in Yunnan Province, China, is suffering from intense tourism pressures and 'disneyfication'. The historic areas are engulfed in pseudo-traditional buildings.

In Japan's ancient capital, Nara, reconstruction of buildings lost centuries ago is occurring for apparently nationalistic reasons. Japan rushed into development in the post-World War II years and failed to see that with prosperity the urban population would come to regret the loss of its national heritage and green areas.

There are some good stories, however, such as Hanoi's goal of diverting redevelopment pressures to the city's outskirts, allowing the historic core to have a better chance of survival.

*What are you currently researching?*

Two new ARC Discovery projects commenced this year. The 'Vietnam: Heritage of a Nation' project, with Colin Long, has already been mentioned. As with the Hanoi book, it uses architectural and urban planning achievements as a way into discussing social and political issues, but it also focuses on the intangible heritage of Vietnam's minorities and the way this has been managed by Vietnamese authorities as part of nation-building efforts.

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The local government thinks only of the immediate need, pushed by the national government, to give priority to industrial development.

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My second project looks at Australia's extra-territorial war heritage and related management and interpretation issues. It focuses on four regional case studies—the Thai-Burma Railway, Gapyeong in Korea, Long Tan in Vietnam, and the Kokoda Trail. This is a team project involving Professor Joan Beaumont from the ANU and my Deakin colleagues, Professor Andrea Witcomb and Dr Bart Ziino.

*What are your future plans?*

I'm moving slowly to retirement, at least in the formal sense. My position at Deakin is now part-time and research only. But I continue with international work and Asian research. In addition to the World Heritage Global Training Strategy, I'll be a resource person at a research workshop on 'Culture and Rights in Thailand' at the Princes Maha Chakri Siridhorn in June. The move to part-time allows more time for other heritage activities such as my membership of the Victorian Heritage Council. In theory it should allow for a little more relaxed life. That I have yet to see.



*Professor Logan is Alfred Deakin Professor, School of History, Heritage and Society, Faculty of Arts and Education, at Deakin University.*

## Courtship and ritual in a Balinese court

*A painting in the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam provides a fascinating glimpse of life in 19th century Balinese courts, says PETER WORSLEY*

In the collection of Balinese paintings of the Dutch painter Charles Sayers, which now has its home in the [Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam](#), is one from Kamasan, Bali. The museum's records indicate that Sayers must have acquired the painting between 1927, when he first went to the Dutch East Indies, and 1933, when the painting was given on loan to the museum.

There are, however, good reasons to date the painting to the second half of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th, prior to Dutch colonial control extending to the entire island. The painter was inspired, at least in part, by descriptions in two epic poems that are known to have circulated in Bali in this period. They were the early 13th century epic *kakawin*

*Sumanasantaka* that narrates the life stories of Princess Indumati and Prince Aja, and the later 16th to 18th century Balinese *kidung* version of the same story.

However, the painter was doubtless also familiar with other renditions of the story from recitals of the epic poems, theatrical performances in the wayang or just from casual retellings, some no doubt in the atelier where the painting was created.

The painter has depicted three important moments in the marriage of a royal couple—first, the 'bridal-choice' ceremony during which Princess Indumati chooses her husband from among a number of royal suitors; second, the temple ritual during which a pedanda Siwa leads the couple seven times around the sacred fire, and finally, two moments in the consummation of their marriage.

The painter has shown greatest visual interest in the depiction of the 'bridal-choice' ceremony and the temple ritual—a ceremony and ritual that must have aroused his interest in the exotic, because there no evidence to suggest either having been performed in Java or Bali.

The painting is made up of a series of linear scenes. We have systematically examined the lineal character of each scene—the iconography of particular characters and the way they are grouped, the gestures they make and which signal the relationships between them and, in particular, the way in which the 'gaze' functions internally—to try to understand how the painter managed these elements of design—not just to depict characters and their behaviours, but also to capture something of the emotional drama of the events portrayed in the painting.



*Courtesy of Tropenmuseum Amsterdam, coll.nr. 809-137b*

Scene 1, on the left is the largest and set in the public space of the common outside the walls of the palace in the kingdom of Widarbha. The painter has designed the scene to capture the drama of the Princess Indumati's choice of husband from among a number of eminent royal suitors. On the right of an ornamental tree, which divides the scene from bottom to top, we see grouped in calm and orderly ranks the bride-givers, Indumati's brother, King Bhoja of Widarbha and his queen, together with their entourage. Princess Indumati's attitude of maidenly reserve is emblematic of this group.

On the left are the royal suitors, the bride-takers. Here the painting depicts a great display of male rivalry incited by erotic desire and given form in the recitation of poetry. There is disappointment and great expectation as one suitor loses his suit and turns with two others in his entourage to look in anticipation at Prince Aja, whose turn has come. A perpendicular line of brick scene-dividing motifs separates the first scene from the second and directs the viewer's attention to the right to what takes place in the second scene. Here the

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## In a Balinese court

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painter depicts a priestly ritual in a temple somewhere on the palace common. Below, a pedanda Siwa leads Prince Aja and Princess Indumati about the sacred fire. To their right we see a puppeteer performing a wayang lemah (an exorcist puppet performance) in unison with a second pedanda Siwa and a pedanda Boda, who are portrayed conducting their solemn ritual on a platform above those circumambulating the sacred fire below.

To view the third and fourth scenes our eye must cross back over the perpendicular line of brick scene-dividing motifs, this time at the top of the painting to view the two scenes inserted into the upper register of scene 1.

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**A distinction is drawn between a world in which the authority of kings holds sway and male rivalry and erotic desire has its proper place, and a field of ritual which the authority of priests' orders and eroticism has no place at all.**

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These two scenes illustrate two moments in the consummation of the marriage of Prince Aja and Princess Indumati. The scenes are separated by the same ornamental tree that divided bride-givers from bride-takers below.

The separation of the two scenes invites comparison of the different experiences of Prince Aja and Princess Indumati during their first lovemaking. On the right, is a scene which captures a moment just before Prince Aja overcomes the princess's feeble resistance to win victory and satisfy his sexual desire; on the left, is a depiction of Princess Indumati's distress in the aftermath her deflowering. She has retreated to the company of her trusted servants and seeks consolation for the violence done her in the battle of love.

The painter, intentionally or not, has designed the painting not just to tell a story, but also to draw attention to

behaviours, ideas and emotional values culturally important to the painter and his audience. The most visually prominent and socially important of these is marked by the line of brick scene-dividing motifs, which separates scene 1 and the inset scenes 3 and 4 on the left from scene 2 on the right.

The painter has drawn a visual distinction between these two areas. To the left, the painting is characterised by a strong horizontal linearity; to the right, by a strong vertical linearity. Here a distinction is drawn between a world on the left in which the authority of kings holds sway and male rivalry and erotic desire has its proper place and a field of ritual on the right in which the authority of priest's orders and eroticism has no place at all.

Interestingly, the narrative traverses these two spheres. The sequence of episodes crosses from the world of kings to the world of priests and returns to the world of kings. Between the choice of marriage partner and the consummation of the marriage royal authority submits to priestly ritual before the marriage can be consummated and the prince and princess become fit to be king and queen. Balinese kings are here as dependent upon priests and the efficacy of their ritual as they are when priests create kings during their consecration or conduct the great purificatory rites on which the wellbeing of their kingdoms rest.



*Peter Worsley is currently Emeritus Professor attached to the School of Languages and Cultures at the University of Sydney. Since 2008 he has been working with Professor Adrian Vickers*

*as Chief Investigator on the ARC Linkage Grant, 'Understanding Balinese paintings: collections, narrative, aesthetics and society'. Since 2000 he has been Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University attached to the Faculty of Asian Studies, where he has been working with Dr Supomo on a study of the epic Old Javanese kakawin Sumanasantaka.*

## Bronwyn Vaughan— storyteller

Bronwyn Vaughan performs at schools and at the [Art Gallery of New South Wales](#) through [Young Australia](#). ANN MACARTHUR spoke to her after seeing her new show *On a Far Far Away Mountain*.

*How did a show with three stories from the Himalayas come about?*

The seed of the show was the gift from my friend and director Brian Joyce of the Tibetan lute that I play. Brian had also directed Tibetan performer [Tenzing Tsewang](#) (1954–2007) in his one-man show 'Hanging on to the Tail of a Goat'. He inherited the instrument when Tsewang died and passed it on to me.

*Tsewang's death was a shock to so many friends around the world. It's really moving to know that the lute he used to tell his own story in 'Hanging on to the Tail of a Goat' lives on to tell more stories from his part of the world. And I thought the performance grew out of a trip to Sikkim!*

That happened next. I spent a month in Gangtok in 2008 soaking up Buddhist culture. I met many musicians, attended cultural events and saw lots of dances like the Cham temple dances with their



*Bronwyn Vaughan—soaked up Buddhism*

wrathful masks. I ended up with three stories that I think express the cultural mix of Sikkim. One is the story of the Robber Girl from Nepal, the other the Paper Dragon from Tibet and then the Tiger Skin Rug from India.

*Your set is beautifully constructed, and you seem to have all kinds of things hiding behind those blue mountains. Do you make your own sets?*

I come from a theatre background where you do need to be a jack of all trades, but I also have the assistance of Janet Clusten to design and build the set. The

script is written first, but it is influenced by what may be the final look of the set. I wanted to express the feeling that I had so often in Sikkim of knowing the mountains are there but not being able to see them that much. The mountains are shrouded in cloud and you get a sense of things coming and going. That translated to a set that has the feel of a pop-up book where the

animals that the robber girl meets and the dragon pop up out of the set, and the tiger skin is unrolled and then put back again. We both also liked the work of visual artist Camille Rose Garcia.

*Asia seems to be a strong theme for you. How do you reconcile telling stories from a cultural background that is not your own? I'm impressed by how sensitively you convey the stories.*

I've tried to tear myself away from Asia but I'm always drawn back. Some of the other shows that have been on at the Gallery are 'When Camels Could Fly' which has a Macedonian; an Afghan and a Vietnamese story; 'Aditi and her Rickshaw' with stories from India and China; and 'Floating on a Sea of Stories' which is from Japan.

I tend to first do extensive research on the stories, music, dance and language. Being from outside, the point is not to copy, but to work on a dramatisation that speaks to Australian young people. Some of these stories have many versions, so I need to streamline characters or events or perhaps change a cruel ending to something more pacifist.

*There are some priceless characters in this show like the tiger who wants to sip English tea like the maharaja, or the red-cheeked little boy who wanders off into the mountains or the dragon with the long tongue. There doesn't seem to be a chance for the audience to lose interest.*

While I'm thinking of a show inspiration can come from anywhere. The boy is called Justeen after the delightful young waiter at the café I ate at in Sikkim, and we made him into a pretty much life-sized puppet. The dragon was named Guru Dragmar after the wrathful form of Tibetan Guru Padmasambhava. Children like a bit of physical humour, hence the smelly tiger

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## Bronwyn Vaughan— storyteller

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skin, which they know is a real tiger. Audience participation comes in with the dragon dance or counting in Nepalese language. I'm aware never to talk down to children. The other important part of my work is to take the stories to where the kids are, to those who may not otherwise set foot in a theatre to see a performance. I do hundreds of school performances each year.

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**Children like a bit of physical humour, hence the smelly tiger skin, which they know is a real tiger.**

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*So this work has been your passion for quite some time. What are you thinking of next?*

I started some 35 years ago as a member of Australia's first theatre education group in Australia Pipi Storm. Our first project was on a raft, which went down the length of the Murray putting on a show at each town along the way. I've always been inspired by multicultural Australia and the beautiful world that it opened up for us.

For my next show I'd like to look at Australia as an Asian country. I picture something set on a river and using both contemporary and traditional Aboriginal stories with those by Australian writers of Asian descent.



*Ann MacArthur is senior coordinator of Asian programs at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.*

## What's on

**2010 ARTS OF ASIA LECTURE SERIES—POWERFUL PATRONS**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Tuesdays 1–2pm until 12 October 2010. These lectures explore the pre-eminent individuals in Asia who have shaped the arts, culture and sense of identity of their peoples. [Full program and online booking.](#)

**HYMN TO BEAUTY: the art of Utamaro**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, until 2 May 2010. Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806) is the quintessential exponent of ukiyo-e woodblock prints of Japanese courtesans. Featuring around 80 prints from the renowned collection of the Museum of Asian Art, State Museums in Berlin, this exhibition is the first extensive survey of Utamaro's work in Australia and also includes work by his contemporaries. [Further information.](#)

**IN REPOSE exhibition and performance, Sydney, 1 April–14 May 2010.** The Japan Foundation presents an artistic homage inspired by century-old Japanese graves around Australia. IN REPOSE is a requiem in tribute to the migrant's connection with their adopted homeland and a salutation to the local Australian communities who tend these graves today. Exhibition and performances are free, but booking are essential. [More information.](#)

**EPHEMERAL BUT ETERNAL WORDS: TRACES OF ASIA, ANU School of Art Gallery, Canberra, until 1 May 2010.** An exhibition by Chihiro Minato, Tsubasa Kimura, Phaptawan Suwannakudt and Savanhdary Vongpoothorn showcasing the significance of words and writing through the brush and lens of four artists with connections to Asia.

**THE SOUND OF GOLD AND STONE, New Purple Forbidden City Orchestra, Friday 14 May, 6pm, Canberra.** Liu Shun, conductor. China's finest ensemble of traditional instrumentalists performs classical Chinese music accompanied by poetry from the great dynasties of Chinese history. Ticketing, 02 6275 2700. [Further details.](#)



# An organisation whose time has come

*The new ANU Japan Institute brings coherence to Japanese studies and expertise at the university—and plans to call things as it sees them.*

**B**eneath a maple tree in the Japanese Garden at the Faculty of Asian Studies building at the Australian National University is a memorial plaque to Antonio Alfonso.

Professor Alfonso took up an invitation from ANU to consolidate and strengthen the Japanese program in the (then) Faculty of Oriental Studies in 1966 and remained at the university until his retirement in 1987. He was considered the first moderniser of the study of Japanese for the whole of Australia, and the world.

Since his time, Japanese Studies at ANU—and in Australia generally—have come a long way. Today, ANU, along with more than a dozen Japanese departments at other Australian universities, has an international reputation for excellence in a wide field of Japanese studies. Japanese Studies at the ANU ranges from the traditional language and cultural courses to law, business and economics, politics, and even seismology.

That diversity, however, created some confusion among people outside the university over the roles of the various bodies within the university such as the Japan Centre, the [Australian Japan Research Centre](#), the Australian Network for Japanese Law, the [Australian Research Network on the Japanese Economy](#) and the [Research School of Asian and Pacific Studies](#).

Now the centres have been brought together under the umbrella of a new body, the [ANU Japan Institute](#), launched last August by vice-chancellor Professor Ian Chubb in the presence of the Ambassador of Japan, Takaaki Kojima.

The idea of a Japan Institute flowed from the [2020 Summit](#), where one of the proposals was that there should be five institutes set up to study Australia's key trading and cultural partners.

[Kent Anderson](#), a comparative lawyer specialising in Japan, is one of six chaired professors who make up the Japan Institute board. Anderson is Director of the new School of Culture, History and Language in the [College of Asia and the Pacific](#) and holds a joint appointment with the College of Law.

'There were two main reasons for creating the Japan Institute,' he said. 'A primary aim was to create a focal point so we could reach out to a broader audience beyond the walls of the university—the broader audience being Australia and New Zealand and Japan, and also the greater world. The second reason was to make the organisation of Japanese studies in the university more rational and easier to understand.'

Although the Japan Institute receives



*Three-way toast—Ambassador Kojima, Professor Chubb and Professor Anderson at launch of the Japan Institute. Photo: Darren Boyd/Coombs Photography.*

funding indirectly both from the Japanese Government through the [Japan Foundation](#) and from the Australian Government's [Australia–Japan Foundation](#), as well as from corporate sources, Anderson is adamant that government funding will not compromise the institute's independence.

'We made a conscious decision to work with the Japanese government, but we want to be able to do so on our terms, without being dictated to—by any government for that matter. We value our independence as scholars,' he said.

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## An organisation whose time has come

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The Japan Institute's general manager, [Trevor Wilson](#), is a former diplomat with extensive experience of Japan, acquired through 12 years living and working there. A graduate in Asian Studies from ANU, he too stresses the need for independence and to be able 'to call things as we see them'.

Occasionally issues or topics that are cross-disciplinary need different perspectives to get to the analytical core,' he said. 'Looking at the new Japanese Government was one of these things, and we organised a public forum on this in Canberra last November. I think there are going to be quite a few issues like that.'



*Trevor Wilson, left, and Kent Anderson in the Japanese Garden at the ANU.*

Anderson acknowledges there are many other excellent centres on Japan, but the Japan Institute differs in its size and scope. 'We've got lawyers and business people, as well as the more traditional language teaching and research focus,' he said. 'One of our most active exchange scholars is a scientist working on earthquakes. Every year he spends a couple of months in Tokyo working with their geologists.'

Wilson believes ANU has been more successful than other universities in continuing to grow in Japanese because it has combined different aspects of the Japanese language as a career.

'ANU has always had really high-quality tuition in Japanese, and even some world-famous Japanese instructors,' he said. 'But we've also emphasised the diverse opportunities arising from the study of Japanese. We've encouraged people to immerse themselves in Japan—the year-in-Japan program, for example, has been incredibly successful in encouraging

young people to go there during their studies to get to know the place better. So we're saying you need to know Japan today, and need to know it well.'

Students of Japanese at ANU are encouraged to explore the full potential of the culture, for example through kabuki or other performing arts groups. Anderson himself promotes a law moot where students participate in a Japanese language law moot in Japan. ANU also has a Japanese debating group in which students debate issues in Japanese.

A management group made up of professors Anderson, Tessa Morris-Suzuki, Convenor of Pacific and Asian History, Jenny Corbett, Executive Director, Australian Japan Research Centre, Professor Rikki Kersten, Department of Political and Social Change and Mr Shun Ikeda, Head of Japan Studies; and Professor Veronica Taylor, Director of the School of Regulation, Justice and Diplomacy leads the Japan Institute.

'The board is unique in having six chaired professors, including four women, all working on Japan,' said Anderson. 'We're also lucky that we stand on the shoulders of some very amazing people, such as Gavan McCormack and Peter Drysdale, and going back to Anthony Alfonso, who virtually created the field of Japanese language studies in this country.'

Trevor Wilson says the Japanese and Australian governments seem to be comfortable with the idea of the Japan Institute.

'The Japan Foundation has been one of our greatest supporters, and has even asked us to take on assignments for them, and for advice on Japanese Studies,' he said. 'It seems this is an organisation whose time has come.'

## Closing the gap—educating girls in rural India

*While China has made great progress towards attaining universal literacy and eliminating the gender gap in education, India lags behind.*

*HARMAN KULLAR, a winner of a 2009 Prime Minister's Australia Asia Endeavour Award, hopes to find out why.*

Improving education in India has been a long and arduous process and, as everywhere, harder in rural areas. The education of girls is impeded by gender-specific issues, some common to most societies, and some particular to India. Girls' education in rural regions is a major challenge.

My Award program will be divided between China and India. I'm fortunate that the [Monash Asia Institute](#) (MAI) has long-established connections with top-rank institutions in each country where I'll be able to pursue my work—at the [Chinese Academy of Social Science](#) (CASS) in Beijing and the [Institute for Development Studies](#) (IDSK) in Kolkata. At IDSK I'll be working with one of my thesis supervisors, the renowned development economist Professor [Amiya Bagchi](#), with whom MAI has a long-standing collaboration.



*Harman with schoolchildren in West Bengal.*

China has made great progress towards attaining universal literacy and eliminating the gender gap in education. While in China I'll try to find clues as to why China's educational achievements (seen as fundamental to its rapid development) have been so impressive, while India has lagged behind.

I want to know what lessons, if any, emerge for India from China's experience. My interest is in primary schooling in

China, for it is at this stage that this mass literacy is established. While in China I'll also spend some time at Hong Kong University's Centre for Chinese Rural Education.

On a recent visit to India I spent some time in villages in rural West Bengal, saw the state of schools, talked to teachers and found again the enthusiasm of children and their parents for quality education. I also met those in charge of [Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan](#) (an Indian Government program to provide useful and relevant elementary education for all children in the 6 to 14 age group by 2010) in Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, obtaining their agreement to assist my research into the SSA program in those two states.

While MAI's links with CASS and IDSK were crucial in setting up those core parts of my Award program, being an Award holder has itself already assisted with other arrangements. The ready co-operation extended by SSA officials will not only help with observing the education system first hand but also allow me to gain some insight into their perspectives on the success or otherwise of various programs.

The PM's award has also paved the way for a placement at the [Indian Institute of Management Bangalore](#) where I will be working with [Professor Nayana Tara](#), a leading scholar of Indian education.

While in West Bengal I observed some of the matters I've read of that impede the growth of literacy and heard of others from those

I talked to. These factors are many and varied and of extra significance in rural areas. They include a school's physical conditions, the distance children have to travel to school, seasonal migrations which take children away from school for months, and teacher absenteeism, among many others. It's even harder for girls because, along with the previous list, other factors specifically affect their education. These are also diverse and include the sex of the teacher, lack of provision of separate boys' and girls' toilets at school, marriage at an early age, expectations that they look after younger siblings and widespread patriarchal attitudes.

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## Closing the gap

*From page 19*

All contribute to the marked gender disparity in terms of literacy over most of India.

Since independence in 1947 India has repeatedly stated the aim of achieving universal elementary education but has not yet managed to do so. A few states stand out as exceptions. Even before the current SSA program the Indian Government had implemented education initiatives in successive five-year plans. Programs such as [Operation Blackboard](#), [the National Literacy Mission](#), [District Primary Education Program](#)—all for education in general—and the [Mahila Samakhya Program](#), along with several others targeted specifically at the education of girls.

A basic aim is to increase literacy rates for girls, which according to the 2001 Indian census is just 54 per cent for the country as a whole. But there are some grounds for hope that matters can improve, Himachal Pradesh is an example.

When the fifth five-year plan was conceived it was hoped that by its end in 1979 India would have attained universal literacy, except for few backward states such as Himachal Pradesh.

Today, in terms of literacy, Himachal Pradesh sets an example to other states, including those much richer. Himachal underwent a schooling revolution from 1961–2001. In the period from 1961–91 literacy rates for females in the age group 15–19 went up from 11 per cent to 86 per cent.

I was all the more impressed with this, as conversation with NGO workers and bureaucrats revealed that Himachal defines literacy 'as ability to read and write paragraphs', unlike some other India states where it simply means ability to write one's name. Many initiatives have contributed to this change. They include provision of scholarships, community-based efforts and building housing to accommodate teachers in remote areas to improve education. I am keen on finding what lessons other states can learn from this experience of Himachal Pradesh.

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Since independence India has repeatedly stated the aim of achieving universal elementary education but has not yet managed to do so.

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While my thesis topic is focused on girls' education in the rural areas of three states my underlying interest in education is wider. I would be pleased if my studies go beyond an assessment of a small portion of [Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan](#) and cast some light on ways we can improve literacy rates, and education overall. I hope to learn in details about this through the Prime Minister's award.

With my background in one Asian culture, I greatly appreciate the opportunity this award provides to develop three-way links between another Asian country, my native country and Australia.



*Harman Kullar is doing her PhD at the Monash Asia Institute under the supervision of Professor Marika Vicziany and Dr Naiyana Wattanapenpaiboon.*

*Born in the Punjab, she studied at the University of Delhi before coming to Australia for postgraduate education. She completed a MEd at Latrobe University and then worked for 18 months in a Victorian state school.*

## Employment

### Lecturer (Level B) in Taiwan Studies

Monash University has received a major grant from Taiwan's Ministry of Education to develop Taiwan Studies. This will enable the hiring of a Lecturer in Taiwan Studies (a position similar to an Assistant Professor at an American university.) The university welcomes all applications from qualified applicants. Please inform any former PhD students or advanced PhD students as well as any other suitable applicants. [Further information.](#)

### Assistant Professor in Sociology/Anthropology of Globalization and Development, Universiteit van Amsterdam

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology has an opening for an Assistant professor in the Sociology/Anthropology of Globalization and Development. The new assistant professor will be expected to spend 60 per cent of his or her time on teaching and 40 per cent on research. The successful applicant will have specialist knowledge in the field of Asian studies, preferably the sociology and anthropology of East Asia. [Further information.](#)

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## Websites

These sites offer career prospects for graduates and postgraduate in Asian Studies. If you know of other useful sites advertising jobs for postgraduates in Asian Studies, please send them to [the editor](#).

[www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk) advertises worldwide academic posts. <http://isanet.ccit.arizona.edu/employment.html> is a free-to-access website run by The International Studies Association.

[www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int) is a free service run by the United Nations to recruit for NGO jobs

[www.aboutus.org/DevelopmentEx.com](http://www.aboutus.org/DevelopmentEx.com) has a paid subscription service providing access to jobs worldwide in the international development industry.

<http://h-net.org/jobs> is a US-based site with a worldwide scope. Asia-related jobs (mostly academic) come up most weeks.

[www.aasianst.org](http://www.aasianst.org) is the website of the Association for Asian Studies. New job listings are posted on the first and third Monday of each month. You must be a current AAS member to view job listings.

[www.timeshighereducation.co.uk](http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk) The *Times Higher Education Supplement*.

[www.comminet.com](http://www.comminet.com) is the site of The Communication Initiative Network. It includes listings of jobs, consultants, requests for proposals, events, trainings, and books, journals, and videos for sale related to all development issues and strategies. You can view all posts on these pages without registering, but will need to register to post your items.

## Awards and grants

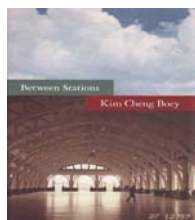
### NLA JAPAN FELLOWSHIP

The National Library of Australia's annual Japan Fellowship is open to established Australian and international researchers in Japanese studies to undertake extended research based on the NLA collections. Fellowships are not provided to assist with the completion of degree studies, and applications from currently enrolled students will not be considered.

[Applications](#) for the 2011 calendar year will be accepted until 30 April 2010. For further information on the Japan Study Grants program, contact Amelia McKenzie, Director, Overseas Collections Management, 02 6262 1519. For enquiries about the Japanese Collection, contact Mayumi Shinozaki, Librarian, Japanese Unit, Asian Collections, 02 62621615.

## New books on Asia

### From Asia Bookroom



**BETWEEN STATIONS.**  
By Boey Kim Cheng.  
Giramondo, Australia,  
2009. 320pp. \$27.99.

*Between Stations* is a collection of personal essays exploring notions of home and belonging, and where they may lie for a migrant writer shuttling between the stations of the old and adopted country, the past and present, the memory and the imagination. The essays attempt to recover a vanished Singapore and reconcile with the lost landscapes of a childhood and the ghost of a distant father, as they follow the narrator through a year of international wandering, en route to relocation in the new world of Australia.

**WAS MAO REALLY A MONSTER?** Lin and Gregor Benton (eds). Taylor & Francis Ltd. United Kingdom, 2010. 199pp. \$65.

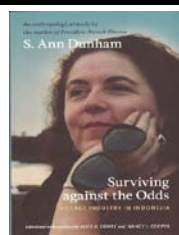


*Mao: The Unknown Story* by Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, published in 2005, portrays Mao as a monster—equal to or worse than Hitler and Stalin—and a fool who won power by native cunning and ruled by

terror. Reviews by serious China scholars, however, tended to take a different view. Most were sharply critical, questioning its authority, and the authors' methods.

This book brings together 16 reviews of *Mao: The Unknown Story*—all by internationally well-regarded specialists in modern Chinese history, and published in relatively specialised scholarly journals.

They demonstrate that Chang and Halliday's portrayal of Mao is in many places woefully inaccurate. While agreeing that Mao had many faults and was responsible for some disastrous policies, they conclude that a more balanced picture is needed.



**SURVIVING AGAINST THE ODDS.** Village Industry in Indonesia. By S Ann Dunham. Duke University Press, 2010. 374pp. \$54.95

President Barack Obama's mother, S Ann Dunham, was an anthropologist who specialised in social and economic development in Indonesia. She received her doctorate in 1992 and died in 1995, at the age of 52, before revising her dissertation for publication.

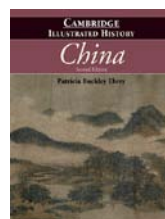
Dunham's thesis adviser, Alice G Dewey, and her colleague, Nancy I Cooper, undertook the revisions at the request of her daughter, Maya Soetoro-Ng. The result is *Surviving against the Odds*, based on Dunham's 14 years of research among craftsmen in Java.

A work of economic anthropology, it reflects Dunham's commitment to helping small-scale village industries survive, her pragmatic, non-ideological approach to research and problem-solving, and her impressive command of history, economic data, and development policy.

The book focuses on rural Indonesia's small industries. Dunham argued that, contrary to the views of many scholars and development experts, wet-rice cultivation was not the only viable economic activity in rural Southeast Asia.

Moreover, she contended that since the villagers were pursuing the economic activities they perceived as most profitable, they did not need development workers to teach them Western-style capitalism.

**CAMBRIDGE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF CHINA.** By Patricia Buckley Ebrey. Cambridge University Press, 2010. 384pp. \$69.95.



In the second edition of this well illustrated, single-volume history, noted historian Patricia Buckley Ebrey traces the origins of Chinese culture from prehistoric times to the present. Her scope is phenomenal, embracing Chinese arts, culture, economics, society and its

*Continued page 23*

## New books on Asia

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treatment of women, foreign policy, emigration, and politics, including the key uprisings of 1919 and 1989 in Tiananmen Square. This edition includes a new chapter on China's recent opening to the world and a fully revised guide to further reading.

**THE RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY IN INDONESIA.** *Thomas Reuter (ed.). Monash Asia Institute, 2010. 113pp. \$24.95.*

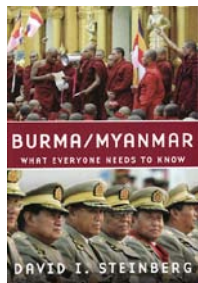


The sudden demise of the Suharto administration in 1998 initiated a period of significant political liberalisation, restructuring and reform. The media still

frequently reminds us of the many difficulties that remain for the Indonesian government and people to resolve.

This volume brings together a group of eminent international experts to reflect on the positive outcomes of the democratic reform process. Accounts of Indonesia's four post-Suharto presidencies are supplemented with analyses of the changing role of political parties, and of the on-going struggle with terrorism that has more or less coincided with Indonesia's reform period.

**BURMA/MYANMAR. What Everyone Needs to Know.** *By David Steinberg. Oxford University Press. 216pp. Oxford University Press. \$32.95.*



This former British colony has one of the most secretive, corrupt, and repressive regimes on the planet, yet it houses a Nobel Peace Prize winner who is in and out of house arrest. It has an ancient civilisation that is mostly

unknown to Westerners, yet it was an important-and legendary-theatre in World War II. A picturesque land with mountain jungles and monsoon plains, it is one of the world's largest producers of heroin. It has a restive Buddhist monk population that has captured the attention of the West

when it faced off against the regime. And it recently experienced one of the worst natural disasters in modern times, one effect of which was to lay bare the manifold injustices and cruelties of the regime.

David Steinberg, one of the world's eminent authorities on the region, explains the current situation in detail yet contextualizes it in a wide-ranging survey of Burmese history and culture. Authoritative and balanced, it will be standard work on Burma for the general reading public.

### NEW BOOKS FROM THE ASAA SERIES

[Southeast Asia Series](#)  
[Women in Asia Series](#)

Books can be ordered through [Asia Bookroom](#)

**MODERNITIES OF CHINESE ART.** *By John Clark. Brill Academic Publisher, 2009. 346pp. € 114.00/US\$ 168.00.*

This publication presents John Clark's collected writings on modern and contemporary Chinese art—almost 30 years of pioneering empirical, in-depth research dedicated to modernities of Chinese art.

Taking up issues not handled much at the time by academic or curatorial writing, Clark wrote articles on a wide range of separate topics, some of which anticipated future discussions. These articles fall into a coherent series of closely related examinations on the problems of 'modernity' in Chinese art. Most of the essays published previously elsewhere have therefore been adapted for this publication, while others, e.g., the first hand observations of Beijing and Hong Kong in 1981, appear in print now for the first time. Chapters often include unique interview material, and much other information not found elsewhere. Including illustrations of over 200 art works in colour with biographical appendices of Taiwan and Hong Kong artists, extensive chronological materials in thematic categories on Chinese art and an extensive bibliography, this is an essential reference work for anyone interested in modern Chinese art.

### Chinese intellectual keynote speaker

A leading member of China's 'New Left' movement, Professor Wang Hui, will be a keynote speaker at the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) 18th Biennial Conference 2010 in Adelaide in July. Wang has recently published *The End of the Revolution: China and the Limits of Modernity*, which was reviewed in the *Los Angeles Times* by Jeffrey Wasserstrom, professor of history at the University of California, Irvine.



Wang Hui. Photo: Morningside Post, Columbia

In recent years, China has undergone a series of dramatic transformations. Some are so profound they've rendered obsolete the very terms once used to describe the country. Can we still refer to China's cities as Third World, now that Shanghai has more skyscrapers than all of America's West Coast cities combined? And can we call the country Communist when the party has capitalist members and a military wing that sometimes seems like a diversified corporation? (The fanciest Beijing hotel I've ever stayed in was owned by the Red Army.)

Of course, after reading about a film banned in Beijing or a dissident punished by the government, Americans with only a casual interest in China may conclude that where intellectual life is concerned, little seems to have changed. The reality, though, is much more complex. Yes, there are disturbing echoes of the past in recent events, such as the unjust 11-year sentence handed down against critic Liu Xiaobo, convicted on trumped-up charges of subversion. Still, an updating of assumptions is required.

In *The End of the Revolution: China and the Limits of Modernity*, Wang Hui, one of China's leading historians and most interesting and influential public intellectuals, shows us why. The topics he addresses in this collection of essays and interviews illustrate clearly that, although the country's intellectual landscape has not changed as quickly as Shanghai's

cityscape, it has not remained static by any means.

One useful way to demonstrate the ground shifts in Chinese intellectual life is to note two things that would surprise a modern-day counterpart to Rip Van Winkle if he fell asleep in Mao's China and woke up in 21st century Beijing. First, our imaginary time traveller would be taken aback, even shocked, to find bookstores selling Chinese translations of George Orwell's dystopian novels and edgy works of home-grown fiction—the stories of Zhu Wen, for example—that cast a jaundiced and satirical eye at contemporary Chinese social trends. Second, he'd discover that Beijing's institutions of higher learning, including Tsinghua University (the school known as 'China's MIT,' where Wang holds a prestigious post), often employ faculty members who received their graduate training abroad and then returned.

If he heard about Wang, our Rip van Winkle-like figure would likely be further flummoxed, since the author's career defies easy categorisation. Until recently the co-editor of one of China's liveliest journals, *Dushu* (Reading), he is not a dissident in the classic Cold War sense, for he supports many policies of the current government. Neither, however, does Wang always color within the official lines. Throughout *The End of the Revolution*, he insists that the Reform era has had mixed results, bringing an increase in creature comforts but also triggering a worrying rise in social inequality. This position is out of step with the current celebratory orthodoxy. Even more confounding, Wang—although educated exclusively in China—could easily find a good job at a university in the West, thanks to his distinguished record of publication and command of spoken English. He is a sought-after speaker at leading institutions and major international conferences, and yet he's shown no interest in leaving China except to take up temporary fellowships. This flies in the face of the notion, so deeply ingrained in

*Continued page 25*



## Keynote speaker

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many Western minds, that such an intellectually curious and iconoclastic thinker could never feel satisfied with academic life in any communist state.

*The End of the Revolution* covers an enormous amount of ground, intellectually and conceptually, as Wang takes up many of the topics that figured prominently in the pages of *Dushu* during his tenure there. He dissects the differences between Chinese 'Liberal,' 'New Authoritarian,' and 'New Left' stances, explaining his tendency to prefer the last. He ponders the ideas of everyone from Hannah Arendt to Karl Marx and considers their relevance to China's current dilemmas. And he discusses the need to see the protests of 1989 as rooted in economic as well as political grievances. Characteristically, his treatment of that topic is partly daring, partly cautious: The subject is such a hot potato that many Chinese writers avoid it completely, but in dealing with it, Wang carefully steers clear of its most taboo aspect—the massacre near Tiananmen Square.

*The End of the Revolution* does not offer any simple take-aways about China, except perhaps that new questions need to be asked. The big issue is no longer, Wang suggests, what it will take for the nation to stop lagging behind but rather what has been lost as the pursuit of equality via revolutionary means is abandoned in favour of a largely successful quest for modernisation. Such an insight alone makes the book worthy of attention—especially because it also has the salutary effect of forcing us to cast aside our preconceptions about the straitjacketing of Chinese intellectual life.



*Jeffrey Wasserstrom* is the author of the forthcoming *China in the 21st Century: What Everyone Needs to know*

## Diary notes

**ASIAN STUDIES LECTURE SERIES, 5pm–6.30pm, University of Sydney, Thursdays, Common Room, School of Languages and Cultures. 6 May**, Chung Tsering, Education Department of the Tibetan Government in exile in Dharamsala, India, 'The education system among Tibetans in India'; **13 May**, Professor Wanning Sun, University of Technology Sydney, Chinese Media and Cultural Studies, 'Dagongmei as sexual agents in China's subaltern literature', and **27 May**, Dr. Terry Woronov, Sydney University, Anthropology, 'Working class urban youth in contemporary China'. [Further information](#), or 02 9114 1295.

**CHALLENGING POLITICS: NEW CRITICAL VOICES, Emerging Scholars Conference, University of Queensland, St Lucia, 10–11 June 2010.** An interdisciplinary conference bringing together early career researchers who are interested in power and politics, but are engaging with perspectives, knowledges and concerns that may fall outside the preoccupations of conventional political science. More information from the

**READING DUTCH FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH intensive residential course, Kangaroo Island, 14 June–3 July 2010.** Open to academics, professionals and current and intending postgraduate students. Participants in the course will receive instruction in reading Dutch historical texts, especially from the period 1850–1950. Dutch texts with the aid of a dictionary. Contact [Helen McMartin](#) for more information.

**ASAA BIENNIAL CONFERENCE, Adelaide, 6–8 July 2010.** The 18th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia will be held at the University of Adelaide. Its theme is 'Asia: Crisis and Opportunity'. See the conference [website](#) for further details and call for papers and panels.

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## Diary notes

### **DISPLACEMENT, DIVISION AND RENEWAL conference, Sarawak, Malaysia, 8–9 July 2010.**

Organised by the Curtin University Research Unit for the Study of Societies in Change (RUSSIC), in conjunction with Curtin University in Sarawak, the conference will be held at Miri, Sarawak, as a sequel to the conference 'Crossing Borders', held in Sarawak in 2007. See [website](#) for further information or contact [Dr Aileen Hoath](#).

### **CHINA UPDATE 2010: Canberra, 14 July 2010.**

Hosted by the Rio Tinto–ANU China Partnership, between the China Economy Program in the Crawford School and Rio Tinto Australia, this is an annual event at which world leading experts present the latest research on the Chinese economy. Venue: HC Coombs Lecture Theatre, Australian National University. Further information from the [website](#). Enquiries: [Ligang Song](#) on 02 6125 3315, [Dominic Meagher](#) on 6125 3831.

### **INDONESIA UPDATE 2010, Australian National University, Canberra, 24–25 September 2010.**

The 28th Indonesia Update Conference will focus on employment, living standards and poverty in contemporary Indonesia Friday and Saturday, 24–25 September 2010. The 2010 Indonesia Update conference aims to provide a research-based assessment, accessible to a general audience, of how Indonesia has travelled in regard to social policies over the past decade, given the ambitious goals the government has set for itself, especially under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Enquiries [Indonesia.Project@anu.edu.au](mailto:Indonesia.Project@anu.edu.au). Ph +61 2 6125 3794, fax +61 2 6125 3700

*You are welcome to advertise Asia-related events in this space. Send details to the [Editor](#).*

## Contributing to Asian Currents

Contributions, commentary and responses on any area of Asian Studies are welcome and should be emailed to the [editor](#). Contributions should generally be between 800–1000 words, and include a photograph of the author and, where possible, a photograph(s) relating to the subject. As *Asian Currents* is intended both for scholars and general readers, please avoid technical language and keep references and notes to a minimum.

## About the ASAA

The Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) promotes the study of Asian languages, societies, cultures, and politics in Australia, supports teaching and research in Asian studies and works towards an understanding of Asia in the community at large. It publishes the [Asian Studies Review](#) journal and holds a biennial conference.

The ASAA believes there is an urgent need to develop a strategy to preserve, renew and extend Australian expertise about Asia. It has called on the government to show national leadership in the promotion of Australia's Asia knowledge and skills. See [Maximizing Australia's Asia Knowledge Repositioning and Renewal of a National Asset](#).

*Asian Currents is published by the ASAA and edited by Allan Sharp. The editorial board consists of Kathryn Robinson, ASAA President; Michele Ford, ASAA Secretary; Mina Roces, ASAA Publications officer; and Lenore Lyons, ASAA Treasurer.*